value and they are being caught and supplied in bulk to dealers in Bhubaneshwar by local fishermen; and

(c) if so, the steps Government propose to take to save the 500 million years old creature?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRINAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) and (b) As reported by Govenment of Orissa, two species of Horseshoe crabs viz. *Carcinoscorpius rotundicauda* and *Tachypleus gigas* are found along the Chandipore coast. Horseshoe Crabs are important for different medical uses. However, they are not captured for any commercial purpose except for some incidental catch in the fishing nets. No reports of bulk catch and supply of Horseshoe Crabs to dealers in Bhubaneshwar have been received.

(c) The following steps have been taken for protection and conservation of Horseshoe Crabs:

1 Wildlife institute of India, Dehradun has carried out study on the conservation status of Horseshoe crabs along the Orissa coast.

2. No commercial production and marketing of bio-medical products would be permitted by exploitation of wild population of Horseshoe Crabs.

3. Ministry of Science and Technology has been requested to explore commercial tapping of the pharmaceutical potential of this species only after scientifically proven breeding programmes including monitoring and certification protocols have been put in place.

4. Awareness camps organized for the fishermen to minimize incidental catches.

Manas national park

634. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that twenty years of insurgency has destroyed Assam's Manas National Park;

(b) whether it is a fact that Manas has lost its entire rhino population and the number of tigers has come down from 93 in 1987 to 65 in the year 2000; and

(c) if so, the efforts Government propose to make to save the Manas National Park?

^""TrfE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND EORESTS1SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) Yes Sir. As reported by the State, during insurgency, lot of destruction took place in the Manas National Park, which included killing of forest staff and damage to the infrastructure including flora and fauna.

- (bTH has been reported that there is no confirmed sighting of rhino at "present in Manas. While no estimation was carried out during 1987, the State reported 53 tigers in 1988-89. The population of tiger in the National Park during the last All India Estimation in 2001-02 was estimated by the State as 65.

(c) Under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of 'Project Tiger', Central Assistance has been provided for restoring the park infrastructure, apart from taking up eco-development activities for the benefit of fringe villages.

(2) It is learnt, that subsequent to signing of an accord by the State Government with the extremist group, the Bodoland Territorial Council has been formed. The park is administered by the local Autonomous Council, which reportedly has taken it as their pride to develop and improve the same.

(3) The Government of Assam has also under taken a project for translocation of rhino to its original distribution area within the state (including Manas) with the support of national and international Non-Governmental Organisations and the US Fish & Wildlife Service

Environmental Degradation

635. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that level of environmental degradation is on the increase in the country;

(b) if so, the details in this regard for the last three years;

(c) whether it is a fact that large scale dependency on fossil fuel is a major cause of environmental degardation;

(d) if so, the details in this regard; and